

Chambers Home
Inahuac, Chambers County, Texas

HABS
TEX
36-ANA
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

MIXED HISTORIC L AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District # 6 Tex 2

Historic American Buildings Survey
Birdsall P. Briscoe, District Officer
4301 Main Street, Houston, Texas.

HABE
TEX
36-ANA
1'

CHAMBERS HOME
Anahuac, Chambers County, Texas

Owner Wilcox family

Date of Erection 1840

Architect Unknown

Builder General Chambers

Present Condition Bad

Number of Stories Two

Other Existing Records Unknown

Materials of Construction Frame, outside spiral stair self supporting.

Additional Data General Thomas Jefferson Chambers was from the state of Virginia. He was the youngest of 20 children. Being born an adventurer he studied numerous thrilling immigrant guides of the new, raw Texas of Mexico and in 1826 he saddled his horse for a trip to this new country of adventure, but upon his arrival in New Orleans, late in 1826 he changed his mind for some unknown reason and took a boat for Vera Cruz, Mexico. Upon his arrival there, he crossed the mountains into the City of Mexico. He remained in this city for three years teaching school and in the meantime studied law. In 1829, by a special act of the Mexican Congress he was admitted to the Mexican bar, after being admitted to the citizenship of that country. Later, this same year, he was appointed surveyor general of Coahuila and Texas and soon after this he came to Texas settling on the present site of Anahuac which he names Chambersea. Chambers had visions and dreamed of his plans to make the site a great city some day; a dream which he never realized. Soon after his arrival in Texas, he received another appointment, that of superior judge of the circuit of Texas at a salary of \$3000 a year. At the end of his first year in this and other capacities his salary remained unpaid by the Mexican Government and being a Mexican citizen he had and exercised his right to take land in payment for the salary due him. In this manner he received more than thirty leagues of land in the state. When Texas declared her Independence in 1836, Chambers swung over to the American side and did much toward their cause. He was named a major general in the Texas army and sent to the United States to raise a division of troops in Kentucky. He raised an army of nearly two thousand troops and equipped them with money he borrowed on his land in Texas. This money was never repaid in full, however, he did, after Texas won her Independence, receive part of the \$23000 he had spent on his army. Then before the end of 1838, the same people who had praised him so highly became his enemies in one of the greatest and longest fought land cases in the history of the state and which ended only a few years ago.

CHAMBERS HOME continued:

It was the case of Chambers vs the State of Texas in which Chambers was asking for payment for the land on which the state was about to build the State Capitol, the site being Waterloo, (Austin) and on part of the land Chambers had received from the Mexican Government. Squatters had settled on the land in question, and in a secret decision handed by the Texas Congress on March 23, 1839 it was decided to pay these squatters the sum of \$15,948.50 (in red-backs which were worth half this amount in U. S. money,) and General Chambers received nothing. However, General Chambers did not drop the case in court, he kept it in the court the rest of his life and his heirs continued the case until a few years ago, at which time these heirs were paid the sum of \$20,000 for the site of the capitol and most of the city of Austin.

Chambers married Miss Abbie Chubb, daughter of the harbormaster of Galveston and brought his bride to the lonesome Chambersea where they settled down to anything but a peaceful life, for he had made many enemies by suits brought against squatters who had settled on his land. In 1861 he was a member of the secession convention which cast the lot of Texas with the Confederacy. After his defeat as a candidate for governor in 1836 he retired to his home in his self styled Chambersea. (Now Anahuac).

While seated in a room of the present house one night of March 1865, he was the target for a bullet shot from the darkness in front of his home and died a few moments later in the arms of his wife with his two daughters looking on. Thus, ended the life of one of the most colorful men in early Texas and with him died his plans for making Chambersea one of the greatest cities in Texas. When the county in which Anahuac is located was organized it took the name Chambers in honor of one of its first settlers, General Thomas Jefferson Chambers, whose tragic end remains to this day one of the great mysteries of the State.

References: Beaumont Enterprise

Bad as this subject may seem at a glance , it teems with details that are interesting. Obviously, the building appears to be the result of an unholy alliance between a Colonial Dame and a builder of Swiss Chalets. It is situated on a narrow tongue of land between the Gulf of Mexico and Trinity Bay at the mouth of the Trinity river. It has been lashed by hurricanes since 1840 but the delicate outside spiral staircase still stands and is still usable. The inside walls are board- and batten and each panel carries a fine moulding mitred at the base board and at the friezeboard above. The entrance door appears to be a pair of doors, but actually the two leaves meet on a narrow mullion which divides the ground into two rooms. The gable in the west end carries an enormous Texas star that through some miracle of chance remains unbroken. The town of Anahuac is at this time considering buying this building, restoring it and converting it into a public library and a meeting place for local clubs. Anahuac is of some minor importance, historically. The first shot which some months later roared into revolution, was fired there. Andrew Briscoe and his partner Dewitt Clinton Harris refused to pay certain duties to the Mexican authorities for supplies they were importing from the United States. Their resistance brought on an engagement in which no one was hurt and whether the duties were paid or not remains a mystery.